

The Graduate School of Education  
at The University of Melbourne present

# UNESCO Observatory Multi-Disciplinary Journal in the Arts

.....

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

**A/r/tography  
and the Literary and  
Performing Arts**

**Volume 3 | Issue 2 | 2013**

.....

Guest Editors *Rita L. Irwin*  
*Anita Sinner*

Editor  
Associate Editor  
Designer

*Lindy Joubert*  
*Naomi Berman*  
*Rosie Ren*

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## EDITORIAL TEAM

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## ABOUT THE E-JOURNAL

*The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is based within the Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne, Australia. The journal promotes multi-disciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence.*

*Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.*

ISSN 1835 - 2776

Published in Australia

Published by

The Graduate School of Education

© The University of Melbourne

The University of Melbourne, Parkville,  
Victoria 3010.



# Special Issue: A/r/tography and the Arts

## Guest Editors

*Rita L. Irwin | Anita Sinner*

### THEME

To be engaged in the practice of a/r/tography means to inquire in the world through an ongoing process of art making in any art form and writing not separate or illustrative of each other but interconnected and woven through each other to create relational and/or enhanced meanings. A/r/tographical work are often rendered through the methodological concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations and excess, which are enacted and presented/performed when a relational aesthetic inquiry condition is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text, and between and among the broadly conceived identities of artist/researcher/teacher. A/r/tography is inherently about self as artist/researcher/teacher yet it is also social when groups or communities of a/r/tographers come together to engage in shared inquiries, act as critical friends, articulate an evolution of research questions, and present their collective evocative/provocative works to others (see <http://m1.cust.educ.ubc.ca/Artography/>).

This special issue of Multi-Disciplinary Research in the Arts invites original creative and scholarly inquiry that engages in critical debates and issues regarding a/r/tographical methodologies; are exemplars of critical approaches to a/r/tographical research; and/or extend the boundaries of inquiry-based research. Contributions are welcome from disciplines across the arts, humanities and social sciences and in a wide range of formats including articles, essays, and artistic interludes, which explore diverse forms of the arts from drama, dance, poetry, narrative, music, visual arts, digital media and more.

# Border Inspections in a University Art Exhibition about Language, Culture and Power: Art Works, Visitor Responses and the Poetic Inquiry of a Curator/Teacher Educator

**Sharon Verner Chappell**  
*California State University  
Fullerton*

## ABSTRACT

This article is a poetic inquiry reflecting on the language, culture and power constructed during a university art exhibition about, for and by bilingual, bicultural youth in North America. The author engages in poetic self-study to understand her role of curator and teacher educator when inspecting borders in the linguistic landscapes, imagined communities, and home-finding that occurred through interactions between the art works and visitor responses during the exhibition.

## KEYWORDS

*border studies, poetic inquiry, a/r/tography, bilingual, bicultural, youth, exhibition, teacher education, identity, community*

### *A Beginning*

*Undocumented immigrants in the US pay  
more taxes in a day  
than multi-billion dollar corporations like GE*

*Colbert testifies to Congress about being a migrant fieldworker  
For a day  
For a        day*

*Hollywood tells the stories of the  
underprivileged  
at-risk  
impoverished  
youth*

*Many of whom don't surprise "us" on screen  
when they speak some kind of  
dialect that accompanies gangsta rap, low cars and gun shots*

*Whose lives are (de)valued?  
Who has been commodified?  
A token of exchange for profit even  
IF the story talks about how  
young people have "found" their voices  
When we watch  
As we are inspired by their hard work*

*What forms of knowledge do we  
swallow again:  
These communities are so sad (poor dears),  
only if only they could find a way out  
And then, OH MY!  
the joy of how they struggle, overcome, succeed*

*Under what circumstances, to whose benefit, for what purposes?*

*I sit in my chair, stare at my screen and out the window  
framed with white wood molding, overlooking our almost new,  
packed and stacked houses  
(that we bought with privileged family dollars)  
Class is not a choice, not a lens, but an unearned privilege  
And every day I feel it to my bones*

*What spaces should I create as an artist, as a teacher  
That allow for interrogation, encourage comunidad  
with various publics?*

*(Do I really want community with various publics?)*

*What spaces and circumstances might disrupt  
the certainty,  
the consensus  
of Hollywood narratives and the American dream?  
What ways of knowing, ways of expressing  
might puncture this well-woven fabric?  
Can you see the holes?*

*What will you make?  
What can we do?  
Will we walk together?*

*Should we*

*-Sharon Chappell, Summer 2011*

Given the past twenty years of restrictive language and immigration policies in the US, adults and young people alike have utilized art making it as a means to portray the life stories of bilingual, migrant, immigrant, and indigenous communities, as well as to raise questions about how language, identity, culture and power intersect in their lives (as documented in Chappell & Faltis, 2013; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Noguera, Cammarota & Ginwright, 2006). As an arts-based, social justice researcher and teacher, I wanted to create a forum for university students and the general public on a university campus to experience a sampling of cultural and linguistic counter-narratives. In Spring 2011, I curated an exhibition, *Border Inspections: Arts-based Encounters with Language, Culture, Identity and Power* which featured art works from public school youth, teachers, university students and faculties across North America about being bilingual and bicultural. The art works responded to issues of cultural representation, immigration and language policy, community membership and schooling experiences through social critique about structures of inequity, as well as testimonial stories of struggle and survival within these structures.

Many tensions emerged in the visitor responses to these art works, which I address in this paper through poetic inquiry. I work to show tensions that emerged in the university library exhibition space, using an aesthetic writing process based on my

own emergent, sensory moments of observation and reflection during the exhibition (for more on poetic inquiry, see Behar, 2008; Chappell, 2009; Maynard & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). In particular, these poems were written in response to artifacts from the exhibition—both art works and written visitor responses—that inspect borders of language, culture and identity as structured through relations of power. I organize this paper into three themes that connect the artworks and comments: *linguistic landscapes, imagined communities, and home-finding*. As I grapple with these themes, I am working from the a/r/tographical framework (Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008) of self-study as an educator, artist and researcher interested in how the exhibition functioned as a pedagogical community in response to living in everyday multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Currently, over 100 languages are spoken in homes and communities across the United States. The most common language used for daily communication other than English is Spanish, although there are some states in which Spanish is not the most common language. Nearly 1.6 million pupils (1 in 4) in the kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) public educational system in California alone are English learners (ELs), or learners of English as an additional language (California Department of Education, 2006). Yet, the EL term does not apply to more than three-quarters of young Latinos in the US who are fluent in English or are bilingual.

In addition to linguistic diversity, everyday cultural pluralism is a complex phenomenon, as we live with high inter and intra-ethnic diversity in terms of language dialects, traditions, foods, roles, values, beliefs, immigration status, schooling and working experiences (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2011). Today, in ten US states, white children are the minority, and either Latino or combined non-white ethnic children are the majority population (Migration Policy Institute, 2010; Sutter, 2011). Further, young people often do not see themselves in the same ethnic or cultural categories as established by adults, often claiming hybrid cultural and linguistic pluralities that are marginalized or ignored by the curricular canon in schools (Harris, 2012; Paris, 2012; Sutter, 2011). I found myself struggling with the theoretical knowledge of this linguistic plurality and the challenge of practicing it as a curator in the exhibition.

As the *Border Inspections'* curator, I observed both contentious and unified perspectives among visitors, artists and/or students that prompted relational and ethical questions about what it means to pursue pluralistic education at a US university. As I walked through the exhibit space and read the visitor comments, I was preoccupied with how the exhibition inspected borders about being/becoming bilingual and bicultural in the United States. In particular, I was interested in examining the placement of language in physical space, the constructed narratives and images of cultural and linguistic community, and the active performance of claiming one's sense of home and belonging in the artworks and public dialog during the exhibition.

## DOING POETIC INQUIRY

**Border Inspections:  
Arts-based  
Encounters with  
Language Identity,  
Culture and Power.**  
California State  
University Fullerton.  
April 2011.



*“Welcome” I thought the exhibition said  
When anyone walked in  
But it did not say*

**Bienvenidos**

**Hwangyong-hamnida**

**Chào mừng**

**Yah oohkááh**

**Swaagatam**

*Or in any other language  
For that matter*

*One visitor writes that the exhibition “spits in the faces of Mexicans  
Entering the country legally and honorably  
Written inb4 this page gets ripped out by  
the censorship committee”*

*(Is that me?)*

*Whose face did I spit on when I didn’t write  
A single label  
postcard  
email  
press release*

*Or anything else  
for that matter  
In anything but*

*English*



*A doll puts her hands up to the words  
(beaner, wetback, strawberry picker, hat dancer and on and on and on and on and on...)*

*A recording at her feet screams: "These stereotypes are killing me"*

*A girl looks into the distance while she considers what to write  
Her pen full of inky potential  
that comes out in four fonts  
in her word-processed second draft: "I am..."*

*Labels hover over printed selves in the comment book:*

*"Bunch of immature children"*

*"Illegal criminals"*

*"Low brow art"*

*I wince at the spit of "naïve dreams and shit"*

*Where does empathy come from?*

*From the art surrounding me, surely.  
But did I consider the hegemony of English  
In my own labels, in the curatorial statement sanctioned by  
The Elementary and Bilingual Education Department,  
The official knowledge, the granted access  
All in one language*

*I feel more comfortable with culture than language  
(As if I could separate the two)*

*I got culture **down**,  
patches sewn together, stitching exposed  
voices shouting from each patterned swatch  
Cultures I can **see***

*but what of my curatorial voice  
of the language  
hidden in plain view*

*(Bienvenidos) I whisper...*

*Outloud and trembling I speak to a hundred families at the opening of the exhibition. I  
rehearsed mi agradecimiento un mil veces*

*"Bienvenidos. Soy orgullosa en sus hijos y el arte."*

*better late than nunca.*

*--Sharon Chappell, Summer 2012*

Throughout the installation of *Border Inspections* in Spring 2011, I reflected on my positionality as researcher, curator and teacher educator, turning to the movement between what I "heard" in the art works and visitor responses. At arrival or departure, under the exhibition signage (in English), visitors left comments in a

binder containing empty notebook paper, resting on a rolling cart by the door. Also on the cart were my university business cards and a series of bilingual children's books for reading in the exhibition space. Behind the cart, I posted a curatorial statement (in English) with demographic, policy and schooling information about bilingual youth in the United States.

The poems in this paper are written in a different font and single-spaced for ease of reading. They include excerpts from visitor's written responses, selected for their relationship to the themes I identified in relation to the art works. As I wrote the poems, I considered how art-making, writing, and research are embodied acts of cultural identity. Schecter and Bailey (2002) suggest that culture is a perpetual process of being differently positioned, and positioning ourselves differently in relation to various contexts and power structures. The act of poetry writing allowed me to explore this embodiment physically, ideologically and relationally (Chappell, 2009; Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Springgay & Freedman, 2007).

For many writers, poetry is a search for the language of home (Behar, 2008; Brady, 2009). This self-inquiry allows me, as Behar expresses, "to experience the emotionally wrenching ways in which we attain knowledge of others and ourselves" (p. 63). As teachers and artists, I believe we should examine the politics of perspective, and confront metanarratives and cultural assumptions that prevail about the lives of our students and the functions of schools, including universities (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Maynard & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). I am particularly preoccupied with how restrictive language and schooling policies have impacted me emotionally, culturally, politically and educationally as a teacher and artist, as well as how the exhibition participated in structuring the identities and knowledge development of minoritized young people—in plain language, in daily speech events (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2006).

Schools (re)produce power structures affecting bilingual youth and their communities through linguistic and cultural borders that often remain uninspected. Cummins (1995) suggests that knowledge generation and identity development occur in relation to the power structured by and through institutional spaces (p. 144). In those spaces, people will choose (or not choose) to interact through coercive and collaborative relations of power. For me, these dynamics can be understood through a thematic analysis of student and community-created texts, schooling environments, and public dialog.

## LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES

A linguistic landscape (Shohamy, Ben-Rafael, & Barni, 2010) is the scene in a public space symbolically constructed through written language: “the marking of objects—material or immaterial—with linguistic tokens” (p. xi) that reflect and reconstitute the power relations of a society. This linguistic landscape may or may not correspond with the people’s use of language and literacy in that structural space. The Border Inspections artists, for example, created their work in the context of a linguistic landscape increasingly occupied by English-only, assimilationist discourses in the US (Hakuta, 2011), such as California Proposition 227’s 1997 dramatic limitation of native language and literacy in schools; the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)’s 2002 elimination of bilingual education as a program model or as a federal office of educational leadership as well as framing of bilingual learning as a matter of English proficiency; and Arizona HB 2281’s 2011 ban of K-12 ethnic studies programs, particularly targeting Tucson Unified School District’s high school Chicano/a studies program.

Such schooling policies might suggest there is an increasing social consensus that the state restriction of home language and culture in schools is desirable and/or effective. Further, once such policies have been in use for an extended time, they become a common sense linguistic landscape (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003; Ranciére, 2010). Yet, when minoritized communities voice opposition to restrictive policies and practices, I am reminded that the consensus around bilingual education is not stable, nor is it entirely disciplined or policed by media, policy and other social institutions (Foucault, 1995). The artworks in this section on linguistic landscapes scrutinize the values and beliefs of an assumed discursive consensus about being and becoming bilingual and bicultural in the United States.

Image 2

### **Stereotypes.**

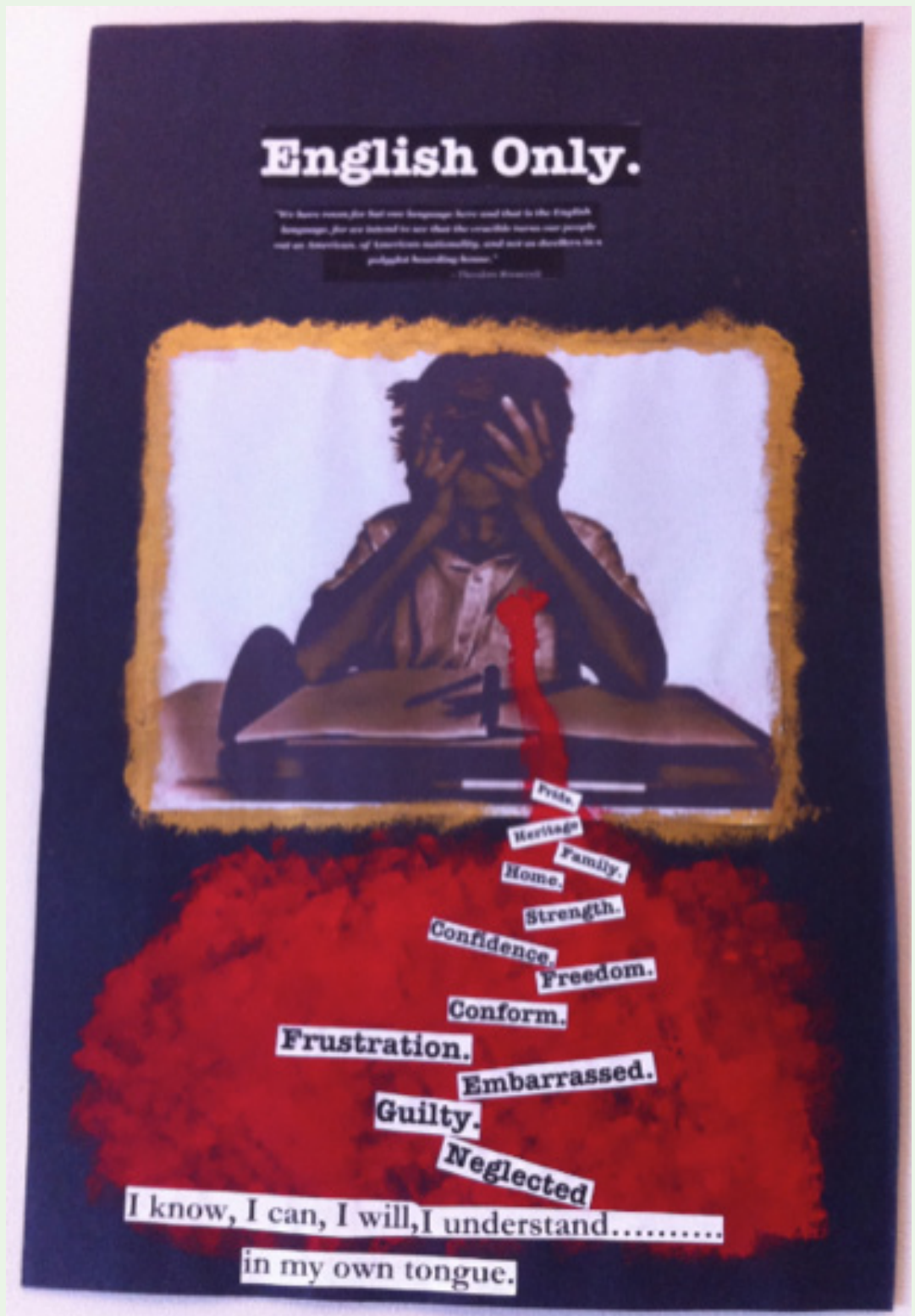
By Sandra E. Vasquez.  
California State  
University Fullerton.



Image 3

**English Only.**

By Sedale Ali. Author's  
university. April 2011



**Brown Eye'd Guerriita.**  
by Rosa Martinez.  
Lincoln Intermediate  
Unit Migrant  
Education Program &  
Dickinson College.



By Rosa Martinez, Age 12

**Brown Eye'd Guerriita**

*I am sentimental and thoughtful.*

I wonder what's in for the next days.

I hear the unspoken.

I see how life can be which is not fair.

I want to be a hair stylist.

*I am caring and bubbly.*

I pretend that everything's alright when it's not.

I feel the importance of the little things that happen.

I touch deep inside my heart what people feel.

I worry about my sister, family, and everyone around me.

*I am unique and beautiful.*

I understand that our lives can have a really long rollercoaster.

I say there should be no racism.

I dream of going back to Mexico, Michoacán and live there.

I try to make everyday my last because life you have once.

I hope my parents could be like yesterday.

*I am passionate for my life and me and nothing else !!*

The artworks themselves are linguistic landscapes that interrogate everyday acts of racism (such as cultural stereotypes or linguistic erasure). Through these interrogations, the landscape becomes redefined as a space of dignity and reclamation. The artists here convey their sensory experiences as marked by institutional artifacts (media messages, school-based signage, parent newsletters, and curriculum). Yet these artifacts do not define the artists, but function as key texts from which to respond and form a personal/political landscape. In Image 4, Rosa says, “I hear the unspoken.” Sometimes linguistic landscapes are implicit—when language and literacy

mark who you are, based on what you are not or what you do not have. In Image 3, Sedale says, "I know, I can, I will, I understand... in my own tongue." The red blood spilled in this poster is filled with statements of self-assertion. Rather than a blood letting, this linguistic landscape is a sort of "Pocha Nostra," (Gómez Peña, 2005, p. 78), an ephemeral community linked by a desire to critically, pluralistically claim educational spaces using multiple languages and cultures.

*I squeeze my eyes tight, hold my breath, and open the visitor's book.*

*Wondering what I will read today.*

*An entry lasting three pages*

*scrawled, carved penmanship*

*About today's people imagining America:*

*"Being an immigrant used to mean something.... They didn't break the law, brag about it, and then march up and down our streets with open-hands demanding something that they never earned, in a language Americans can't understand"*

*I glance up and see*

*That the school walls are (not) posterred with a bleeding river*

*Few notice*

*a language gone*

*a crossing stopped*

*a history smoothed,*

*cleaned up with textbook icons*

*We should grow up, the person writes*

*(as if a child created this erasure)*

*As if a child doesn't know how it feels*

*To be tagged*

*I glance back down, flip more pages:*

*Que soy un hombre con sueños.*

*Un niño con una esperanza.*

*OPEN YOUR EYES TO THE WORLD [UNIVERSITY]!!*

*What does it mean to be apart yet not truly a part?*

*I draw myself up,*

*Preparing for another uncertain journey as student/teacher*

*Of imagining a world*

*With texts rewritten and tongues untied*

*--Sharon Chappell, Summer 2012*

## IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

As I suggest in the poem above, visitors did not always view the exhibition's linguistic landscape of hybridity and border crossing as hopeful or ideal. As the curator and a teacher educator, I often struggled with the tensions I observed between struggles expressed in the artworks and some visitors' resistance to empathy and perspective taking about those struggles. Why did these counter-narrative linguistic landscapes not affect everyone who entered the exhibition space? As an educator, what was my purpose in terms of affecting change toward increased dignity for bilingual, bicultural youth? How might I provoke an examination of assumptions about current linguistic landscapes in schools and the imagined communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003) that teachers and young people propose allowing for an increased plurality of experience?

I began to examine the types of imagined communities present in the exhibition as a method of understanding how we construct communities through creative time and space as well as how we open and maintain membership in those communities. Image 5 is a wall of cultural tags produced by migrant youth in San Diego to convey their unique experiences being bilingual, bicultural and part of migrant families. This wall comprised an imagined community in which social belonging and critique, as expressed through multiliteracy expression, are central to their schooling. These cultural tags show a dialectical relationship between acknowledging and celebrating personal/group identities and understanding the impact of social inequities (as in school, health care, housing, public safety). Image 6 shows the signs held by Los Angeles high school students concerned with immigrant rights. Image 7 shows a university student group demonstrating the social erasure of personal names, identity markers, and other home language use in the US. By naming this artwork *Don't Erase Me*, the students assert their vision that equitable schooling requires identifying dehumanizing linguistic and cultural acts as well as protesting when those acts occur.

Image 5

**Mi Barriohood.**  
By Migrant Students.  
ICOE-Migrant  
Program Region VI

Summer Migrant  
Academy: ICOE &  
SDSU-Imperial  
Valley Campus.



Image 6

**May Day Protest**  
by Luis Garcia and  
Jefferson High School  
Art Class, Los Angeles.



Image 7

**Don't Erase Me.**  
Student collaborative  
performance.  
California State  
University Fullerton.





*Mi Barrio*, *May Day Protest*, and *Don't Erase Me* are artifact traces of larger performances, in which young people enacted the creation of an imagined community (by creating a wall of tags and posting them publically at their school; creating protest signs and marching with them during a May Day demonstration; and erasing penciled identity markers for an hour in the university quad). These artworks reflect an awareness of identity assertion in relation to inequitable treatment and access to resources. In this way, imagined communities are about participation: how we see ourselves in action in the world, and the hopes we have to (re)construct the world through these actions. Rancière (2010) suggests that through performing both testimony and critique, artists and audiences can imagine new pluralistic communities. Creating spaces to tag and protest, for example, and then to remind audiences of those actions through an exhibition, shifts art production and consumption from an elitist enterprise to one of communion and relationship building. These spaces can ask viewers to find “strange” the phenomenon explored in the art (to expose its assumptions and normalizations), to identify the reasons one might see it as strange, and then to mobilize for change utilizing their new perceptions.

Both testimonial and critical art can be “dissensual” practices (Rancière, 2010, p. 211) that challenge a mainstream “commonsense” about society, but they might not reach audiences who are hostile or uncomfortable with such destabilization. As a curator and teacher educator, I often reflect on not “reaching” all visitors through art-making and exhibition. I am beginning to see a different purpose: to utilize exhibition as a means to reimagine the university’s role as a creative commons space where students and young people can search for greater understanding of themselves and the world—what it means to be at home.

## HOME-FINDING

Home-finding refers to moments when a displaced cultural group during a time of social, political, economic, and/or cultural crisis actively reconstructs their sense of home. This reconstruction includes emplacing oneself, one's life and sense of belonging in a new geographic place or social space (Meyers, 2008; Holm Pedersen, 2003). In art, home-finding includes aesthetically engaging “performative mechanisms [that] create relational and dialogic interspaces of orientation, dwelling, and emplacement and methods of bodily attunement to places” (Meyers, 2008, p. 171). Both the artists and visitors in the *Border Inspections*' exhibition engaged in home-finding, as they raised questions of self-identity, memory, and belonging and regularly re-mapped personal paths through the world. Home-finding in the exhibition often occurred through re-inhabiting family's choices, personal bodily identity markers and social group memberships (Meyers, 2008).

Image 8

### **Shelter**

by Miguel, Bonita High School, Los Angeles.



Image 9

**La Noche**

by Louisa Castrodale  
and Luis Fausto, Palm  
Springs High School.



**Unearthing: Room 217  
makes an edible school  
garden**

by Saskia Stille and  
Room 217, OISE/  
University of Toronto.



These artworks share an orientation toward building physical worlds that assert social, psychological and emotional relationships across language and cultural experience. In Image 8, youth artist Miguel constructed a shelter from cardboard boxes to depict his family's sometimes homelessness. Careful construction of the stairs, awnings and partitioned rooms shows a bodily attunement to searching for and defining home. In Image 9, a teaching artist and high school art teacher utilize a found mattress as the surface for an emplacement narrative about a migrant family. In Image 10, immigrant children and families build an edible garden at their school, growing with foods from their native countries. The garden portraits feature the community at work, with a focus on faces and hands.

These physical strategies of home-finding can be inspected in terms of what the body can do, persisting, critiquing, and creating strategically in time and space. Where others see empty boxes, rejected mattresses and untilled earth, minoritized communities—youth and families, artists and teachers—envision new dwellings for belonging. These physical artworks because counter-narrative homes, emplaced in public spaces against a homogenous common sense narrative focused on achievement gaps and limited English proficiency. An asset-based, funds of knowledge perspective identifies this home-finding process as a set of skills—aesthetic, linguistic, social and psychological—that raises questions and embraces the ambiguity of young people's everyday multiculturalism (Harris, 2012; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992).

I.

*Faces line the walls, looking out and down at this unearthing  
A home made of cardboard boxes  
An emerging shelter  
Does it need walls, a roof, or some girded gate?*

*A month has passed since I closed the exhibition.  
I lean back in my chair, the visitor comment book in front of me.  
I unbuckle my shoes.  
My feet need to breathe.*

*My phone buzzes. It is one of the artists.  
"You can keep the mattress," she says.  
"It is so heavy, and the trip to campus is so far."  
The mattress stands propped against my office wall, the family resting peacefully  
Content in each other's arms.  
Their story from a dusty highway  
Mattress abandoned, art teacher finds a place to paint their souls  
A cloud fills the air as the box frame lands in the pick up.  
Then, to the high school where a teacher paints the family,  
marks the mattress with a poem of  
**La Noche***

*Finding home in arms, twin coils under their backs*

*I know the mattress has no space but against my office wall  
I look up from my computer and feel tears flowing through visitor emails  
Telling how **La Noche** moved them:  
the graduate student, the third generation Chicana,  
the freshman who is the first in her family to attend college.  
The mattress breathes, pulses, moves memories into futures*

II.

*I remember one young man in particular.*

*We met a week after I opened the exhibition.*

*He lumbers in, filling the space, shaking my hand.*

*I am running a workshop, and I ask the group to use pastels and  
find something in the dust as they rubbed the chalk down*

*Something about themselves                      in school*

*The young man points to the mattress*

*And the group follows*

*I ask them what they see*

*His face is quiet and his ideas are loud:*

*“The family holds each other, there is peace and strength in their love.”*

*I hand out pastels and paper. He settles against a table and uses red,  
covering the page with streaks and dust.*

*He carves out black words.*

*The workshop ends, everyone leaves, and  
he lingers:*

*“I am so glad to be here looking at all this art.*

*In my art class at school, I feel stupid and can't make anything look good.*

*Drawing about fruit, painting landscapes.*

*Now, here I am surrounded by art that is made by people like me, about things  
I have felt:*

*sharing a mattress with mami and papi for years as we traveled to the crops.*

*Knowing the sacrifice mi abuelo made to come over the fence.*

*I look at the mattress and feel proud.*

*My art class at school never asked me to think about these things.*

*Thank you.*

*Thank you for today.”*

*Arms surround me, and he hands me his drawing.*

*“Are you sure you don't want to keep it?” I ask.*

*“No, it is for you.*

*I have what I need in here.”*

*He pats his chest.*

III.

*I flip the pages of the comment book.  
Each dusty embrace contradicts the next.      No one is sure.*

*A visitor expresses love for his immigrant mother:*

*“She adapted as best she could raised children, bought property,  
played by the rules set forth by the American people and succeeded.  
She didn’t hold steadfast to her former languages, beliefs, & culture  
in the hope that the white man would adapt to her.  
She made the choice to come here for a better life &  
made the changes necessary to make that happen...  
It’s great to be open-minded, but not so open your brain falls out”*

*What if you choose **not** to change  
Or, if try as you might, you just **can’t** change  
You continue to feel clumsy, stupid, erased  
In those rules set forth by someone else*

*Who erected the fence, drew the map, structured movement    through space*

*I flip the page. Another visitor writes:*

*“It was instant  
I saw the mattress and my tears just started flowing  
I am proud to be Mexicana, Latina & trabajadora.  
Gracias por toda el esfuerzo y inspiración  
Me encanto”*

*I am back in my chair. My feet bare.*

*How do I attend to those buried by silence  
To unearth something else, to till a different ground?  
To push past old ideas of coming home*

*I want dry soil under my feet and muddy clods in my boots.  
I wonder what material each home is made of*

*I close the visitor book, turn off my light and wiggle my toes.  
Settling into the dust, I listen to the silence  
Then reading the poem on the mattress, practicing my Spanish.*

*I whisper to myself  
even though  
the door is closed.*

*--Sharon Chappell, Winter 2012*

## BORDER INSPECTIONS AS PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

This exhibition has shown me the potency of cultural and linguistic borders as a pedagogical space, a pedagogy that builds on the work of border theorists in education, culture and performance studies (Chappell, 2009; McLaren, 1999; Anzaldúa, 1999; Lugo, 2005; Gomez-Peña, 2001; Hamann, Zuñiga, Sánchez-García, 2006). I have wandered across borders of art, childhood, knowledge and identity in search of a better educational home. Yet, my poetic inquiry has left me with more questions than answers, such as: how do we build schools as places where minoritised young people feel a sense of belonging, where they can negotiate ideologies about language, citizenship, immigration, school curriculum and academic achievement.

As I analyzed my own experiences participating in the exhibition on my university campus, I unfolded three layers of analysis that teachers, artists, and teacher educators might use to inspect borders about the generation of knowledge and the development of identities in schools. Analyzing *linguistic landscapes* helped me understand how ground-up and top-down communities anchor territory through written markers of language. These markers may be explicit, such as the act of using labels to identify an artwork or marking up another visitor's statements in the comment book. These markers also may be implicit, such as my use of English-only labels and promotional materials about the exhibition. The linguistic landscapes of a space where bilingual, bicultural youth undertake knowledge construction—in a classroom, cafeteria, library, garden or exhibition—indicate social status and value conferred to languages and cultures in society.

Through an analysis of the *imagined communities* constructed in the artworks and visitor comments, I learned about the ways that social structures and cultural perceptions influence people's imagining of group membership and communal belonging. In the exhibition, these imagined memberships stemmed from common struggles, such as maintaining language and culture against schooling policies that enforce English-only, or opposing citizenship policies that prevent financial aid necessary to attend a university. Conversely, some imagined communities stem from a projected assimilationist, nationalist identity: the consensus of how bilingual, bicultural people *should* act to belong to that imagined America. In terms of schooling, educators and policy makers can analyze how cultural, linguistic, and geographic configurations of belonging are intertwined, and how these configurations influence student learning in school. The scope and sequence of curricula, for example, are not designed to flexibly meet the needs of transnational and migrant youth, for example, who participate in schooling in multiple regions and nations (Hamann, Zuñiga, & Sánchez García, 2006). The rigid control over teachers' time and the disciplinary separation of skills often prevents curricular reform that would attend to relationships between language, culture, history, and social action.

I also learned ways in which the strategy of home-finding can become a critical pedagogy that publically encourages connections between the personal and the political, the individual and the institutional (Chappell & Faltis, 2013; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Low, 2011). Rather than a nostalgic act, strategic *home-finding* can position young people's and minoritised people's stories as a new curricular canon both at the university and in preK-12 education. Home-finding can allow diverse publics to re-claim spaces of knowledge generation that continue to be denied



to them (as the school day focuses on heroes, holidays, benign concepts, and discrete skills). The artists in *Border Inspections* emplaced messages of urgency, suggesting the pedagogical necessity of utilizing themes of dwelling, inhabitation, homesteading and homecoming (Myers, 2003) as they intersect with issues of power and social domination. Under what circumstances are homes built and homes denied? When do we feel at home while at school? What does it mean to come home after being somewhere that is not home? Why is being at home so important to learning and development, to being and becoming? One anonymous visitor's comments illustrates the necessity of raising these questions in educational settings:

*Que soy Un hombre con sueños. Un niño con una esperanza. Un ser humano como tu. Un muerto by la ignorancia. Soy Moreno de color. Bajito de estatura. Gordo por las tortillas pero inteligente por naturaleza. Soy maya y tambien un terricola. Soy quien yo quiero ser. No más dame la oportunidad.*

In my future work as a curator of exhibitions bridging preK-12 and university schooling, I will plan future pedagogical opportunities to explore linguistic landscapes, imagined communities and home-finding. Artists and visitors might take linguistic tours of exhibition spaces, their schools and communities; they might map where language is territorialised and reflect on the meaning of this linguistic marking in our lives. I would like students and teachers to create art works about the communities they imagine when they think of "America," of being a "good student," of belonging to a "culture"—of what it means to live in an era that has seen the death of a single "normal" (Simon, 2012). I imagine the possibility for education, and schooling in particular, to disrupt a consensus built on an assumed experience, in which a multiplicity of publics insert their voices and bodies into the knowledge production valued and utilized by schools (Dardar, 1995; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Gómez-Peña, 2005; Noguera, Cammarota & Ginwright, 2006; Vargas, 2011).

Poetic inquiry can prompt families, students, teachers, and administrators to imagine our schools in the Southwest from new, critical and creative vantage points. The attack on ethnic studies in Tucson (Castellanos, 2012), most recently leading to boxing students' books while they watched from their desks, demonstrates the necessity of this work. Educators, policy makers, researchers, and others interested in developing the lives of bilingual, bicultural youth should write reflexively about these pedagogical acts, thinking deeply about the crossroads we are at in contemporary, pluralistic schooling.

*"We're here to stay"*

*A poster lay defiantly at the feet of the Tucson school district  
Arms crossed after lighting candles of mourning and hope  
Young people demand better worlds than  
Adults boxing books in front of their noses*

*A girl takes a sip of water  
Megaphone resting against the tree  
Throat burning from demanding to be heard  
The linguistic landscape  
Stretches far in front of her  
A sidewalk of English only school policies  
A secretary's desk of reluctantly translated school newsletters*

*"I am Latino"*

*A boy whispers behind her  
He is inspecting these borders too  
The water slides down the girl's tongue and she can feel  
The words rolling  
Her taste buds perked to fresh, mad, hopeful words  
she had no idea were poised inside her*

*The girl turns around and grabs the boy's hand  
A little squeeze, just firm enough  
Let's do this thing  
She grabs her sign and passes it to him  
Imagines a community better than this  
The sign is shaking, and the girl looks at the boy  
He is trembling  
Words not rolling yet  
If only I could unfurl my tongue so he could see  
If only I could open my mouth and deep from the cavern of my throat  
The words wrapped in blankets of determination could soothe him  
Today is the day  
He will see for himself why we are here*

*We're here to stay*

*--Sharon Chappell, Winter 2012*

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